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Ce document fournit des indications permettant une évaluation continue de l'atteinte des objectifs du programme d'English language arts du primaire. Le premier chapitre explique ce qu'il faut entendre par l'évaluation continue des élèves de ce programme. Le second donne des précisions sur ce qui doit être évalué. Le troisième propose un modèle d'évaluation continue. Le dernier chapitre aborde des aspects particuliers de l'évaluation dont doit tenir compte ce programme comme les styles d'apprentissage, les réalités multiculturelles, etc. En annexe, on retrouve le texte d'une enseignante qui explique comment elle intègre la démarche d'évaluation dans une unité spécifique du programme de littérature, la biographie.

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DEFINITION OF THE DOMAIN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELEMENTARY

CYCLE ONE AND CYCLE TWO

APRIL 1993

Québec 

DEFINITION OF THE DOMAIN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

ELEMENTARY

CYCLE ONE AND CYCLE TWO

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INTRODUCTION

This document, *Elementary English Language Arts: Definition of the Domain, Cycle One and Cycle Two* (#16-2209-01A), has been prepared and distributed to provide all educators concerned with Elementary English language arts with the guidelines for continuous evaluation. The guidelines given in this document are derived from the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program and the fullest comprehension of these guidelines will therefore be found only through reference to the program document.

School board officials, English language arts consultants, in-school administrators, teacher professionals and parents are reminded that the specific methods used for the continuous evaluation of students cover a wide range of activities, designed by school boards and classroom teachers, all of which are intended to describe the progress of individual students throughout the school year. This document does not speak to the standardization of diverse approaches to assessment; in fact, it may be viewed as providing support for a philosophy of evaluation informed by the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program, classroom teaching practices and the complexity of all of learning. However, it is also important to note that the guidelines articulated in this document apply to the evaluation of all students, at all levels, in the anglophone educational sector of the province of Québec. While the continuous evaluation of students involves a wide range of information and activities, the guidelines contained in this document describe the particular characteristics of language development and growth through which all the evidence gathered about students will be interpreted.

Continuous evaluation of student progress in the language arts, whether of a formative or summative nature is determined on the basis of the objectives of the official curricula of the province of Québec for the teaching of English language arts. The guidelines which are given in this document describe the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program from the perspective of curriculum-based evaluation methods and practices.

Accordingly, scores which students receive on mass-produced, standardized batteries of achievement tests may not be used to determine their success or failure in Elementary English language arts. These types of achievement tests promote a view of language competencies and performance contrary to the whole language, child-centred and developmental curriculum of Elementary English Language Arts I-VI. Popular varieties of such achievement tests typically feature : tasks in reading comprehension, tasks in word recognition and spelling, and normative criteria for establishing success or failure in language competency.

Standard achievement tests differ from board-wide, end-of-cycle evaluation instruments which are developed to ascertain the success of students collectively in attaining the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program, as well as to determine the future professional needs of teachers. In addition, the ministère de l'Éducation may develop tests for the purposes of monitoring the progress of students towards the attainment of program objectives. While such forms of school board and ministerial testing may be said to respond to a particular set of needs, it should be understood that testing is but one, limited form of evaluation and will not, by its very nature, provide comprehensive evidence about the developmental progress of students in the language arts.

The Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program was implemented in all Cycle One classrooms throughout the province by September 1986; in Cycle Two classrooms, by September 1988. In the light of the establishment of a province-wide curriculum for the teaching of the English language arts, guidelines for continuous evaluation must address the issue of the relationship among teaching, learning, and evaluating. Therefore, this document seeks to clarify the implications for continuous evaluation as they relate to the progress of students towards the attainment of the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program.

CONTENT OF THE DOCUMENT: AN OVERVIEW

The Elementary English Language Arts Definition of the Domain, Cycle One and Cycle Two, is a comprehensive document. These pages provide a summary of the contents. However, it is only by reading the whole document that the orientation and methods for evaluation in English language arts will be fully understood.

Chapter One: Guidelines for Continuous Evaluation

This chapter reviews the rationale and objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program, on which the evaluation of students in both Cycle One and Cycle Two is based. The purpose of this chapter is to explain what is meant by "continuous evaluation" of students in English language arts. Continuous evaluation is based on the principle that evaluation is an essential partner in all of teaching and learning. As well, continuous evaluation means that the evidence gathered by teachers throughout the year on a formative basis is also the evidence which is used for summative evaluation. Continuous evaluation of students in English language arts involves much more than a mark on a report card, or an end-of-unit test. The process of evaluation is characterized by an ongoing dialogue between teacher and learner, and by a partnership among teachers, students, school board and in-school administrators, and parents. Continuous evaluation, based on Whole Language pedagogy, is informed by the self-evaluation of students, as well as a great deal of evidence collected by teachers, over time. The process of evaluation promoted in this document takes seriously the role of evaluation in the development of the student, and in providing children and parents with detailed and accurate information.

Chapter Two: Focus of Evaluation

This chapter presents WHAT will be evaluated. In keeping with a principle of evaluation embedded in the processes of teaching and of learning, the elements of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program which provide the WHAT for evaluation are derived from the objectives of the curriculum. Complementary to the chart which appears in this chapter on page 33, readers will find a text, written by a practising teacher. This text is included in the Definition of Domain in order to demonstrate how the elements of this chart

should be incorporated into classroom activities. It is important to note that this document promotes an integrated view of teaching, learning and evaluating, and that the elements for evaluation presented in this chapter are meant to be applied within the context of the particular classroom in which teachers are teaching. The elements which will comprise the continuous evaluation of students in English language arts focus on the ways in which students make meaning of language, in different situations, in which there are opportunities for listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program is a whole language, child-centred curriculum. Therefore, evaluation practices will describe a comprehensive pattern of individual development, in which the language arts are viewed as an integrated whole. This means that the focus of evaluation in English language arts provides an integrated view of language development, and not an evaluation of discrete language abilities, knowledge or skills.

Chapter Three: Relation of Key Elements in Evaluation to Evaluation Practice

This chapter suggests a possible framework for continuous evaluation. It is important to note that, while the framework which is suggested is a portfolio, the principles of evaluation discussed in the chapter are of crucial importance. These principles involve evaluation as ongoing dialogue between teacher and learner, as well as among all educational partners. In this dialogue, the student's self-evaluation is seen as a vital element in the pattern of development which emerges. The reason for this is that the evidence which students provide about their own growth is a critical indicator of their language development.

Chapter Four: Other Considerations

This chapter describes other evaluation issues in English language arts, specifically: learning styles, multi-cultural realities, and students with special needs.

The final sections of the document comprise a text written by a practising teacher, explaining how she incorporated the WHAT of evaluation into a unit she was teaching, and a professional bibliography of books which is not inclusive, but does provide a springboard recent developments in assessment and evaluation.

CHAPTER ONE

TEACHING, LEARNING, EVALUATING: GENERAL GUIDELINES

Since its introduction in 1986, the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program has stimulated an ongoing dialogue among teachers, about their common assumptions, practices and beliefs with regards to the teaching of the language arts. Although these collective pedagogical perspectives take on an individual character in every classroom around the province, they are reviewed here in the spirit of the role these pedagogical principles play in the shaping of all evaluation practices. This chapter is organized into three sections: the principles and practices on which the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program are based; the guidelines, or rationale, which provide the framework for the continuous evaluation of students in the language arts; and the functions of formative and summative evaluation in a whole language, child-centred and developmental curriculum.

- **Continuous Evaluation: Principles and Practices**

Evaluation is an integral part of all teaching and learning. Whether the occasion is formal or informal, evaluation is an implicit aspect of all classroom interaction and decision-making. **Evaluation is predicated upon an appreciation of the distinct abilities and intentions of the learner.** When we regard what a learner is trying to do, and make suggestions about how this intention may be realized in the best possible way, we are evaluating. When learners learn, they are constantly engaged in decisions and explorations which allow them to evaluate what they know, what they need to know, and what they can learn from--and in the company of--others. To see evaluation from this perspective is to see it as a kind of positive and ongoing dialogue which learners hold with themselves and with others, a dialogue which places teaching and learning in the context of developmental growth and language-learning processes. **Evaluation is a pedagogical activity which seeks to observe, describe and support patterns of development, in an ongoing dialogue between teacher and learner, that involves far more than determining a grade on a report card.**

Evaluation involves criteria--a sense of what one is looking for in relation to an individual student's language development. Criteria for evaluation take account of the learner together with the content and contexts in which learning takes place. The criteria for the evaluation of individual students in the province of Québec are found in the central premise and objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI

program and are consistent with a whole language, child-centred approach to the teaching of the language arts.

The central premise of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program is that:

Growth in the language arts is a developmental process which occurs over a period of time and flourishes in a supportive, literate environment in which children create their own order and cohesive language rules by using language in varied, functional and meaningful contexts.¹

This single statement, in turn, is governed by certain principles and assumptions about the development of language abilities, as well as the nature of experiences with language. It is these common principles which, together with the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program, allow us to examine the connection between evaluation and pedagogical practice. These common principles are stated in the curriculum document as follows:

1. that language learning is a developmental and continuous process which occurs over time;
2. that the child and his/her language are the focus;
3. that the language arts must emphasize the personal, functional and social aspects of language and its use, and the role of language in the total learning process.
4. that the language arts must be viewed as a whole;
5. that the language arts must be presented to children as a whole, meaningful, functional, communication system;
6. that the language systems (graphophonic, syntactic and semantic) are interrelated and these relationships must be discovered and used by the learner in whole, functional and meaningful contexts;
7. that the search for meaning is the core of every language experience;
8. that the child must be immersed in a literate, supportive, secure environment in which the language arts are used in purposeful, active and meaningful

¹ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation Elementary School Curriculum, English Language Arts I-VI, Code 16-2209A (Québec : Ministère de l'Éducation, 1983) p.11

ways;

9. that children use the arts of listening, speaking, reading and writing in situations in which these processes are mutually reinforcing.¹

Any approach to the continuous evaluation of a student's language growth and development must be congruent with the values, assumptions and beliefs which inform these principles.

- **Guidelines for continuous evaluation**

How, then, should guidelines for continuous evaluation take into account the views and values of language and learning, as these are expressed in the pedagogical principles and objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program? The following guidelines for continuous evaluation which follow respond to this question, and provide an inner framework, or rationale, for the evaluation of the progress of individual students towards the achievement of the objectives of the Elementary English Arts I-VI program.

ONE

WHOLE LANGUAGE

- The language arts--listening, speaking, reading and writing--are the functions (and the forms) of a language system that is whole. In addition to their different functions and forms, the language arts are also language systems. The language systems are graphophonic, syntactic and semantic. Just as listening, speaking, reading and writing comprise the wholeness of language, so, too, these three language systems occur in interrelationship as persons use language. Whole Language is neither a philosophy nor a method of teaching; Whole Language is pedagogy. *Pedagogy* may be defined as both the art and the science of teaching. The science of Whole Language *pedagogy* may be understood in terms of all that we know about language and learning, a field of knowledge which has developed enormously over the last thirty years. At the heart of this knowledge is the

¹ Québec, Ministère de l'Éducation *Elementary School Curriculum, English Language Arts I-VI, Code 16-2209A* (Québec : Ministère de l'Éducation, 1983) p.11

understanding that the different functions and systems of language are integrated, and that development in one area of the language arts promotes growth in the other areas. In practice, Whole Language *pedagogy* creates the conditions within which language stays whole, so that students learn to draw upon listening, speaking, reading and writing as integrated, language-thinking processes. In this transformation, from knowledge about language into teaching practice, which makes Whole Language *pedagogy* an art. Therefore, the continuous evaluation of the language growth and development of individual students, must involve students with all of language--in integrated activities that provide occasions for listening, speaking, reading and writing--and which ask students to draw upon their understanding of all three language systems.

TWO

GROWTH IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

- Evaluation in the language arts is based on the continuous evaluation of growth in listening, speaking, reading and writing, in contexts, or situations, that are meaningful to the student. The pattern of language growth which emerges from a continuous evaluation of individual students should describe how students interrelate the functional, systematic and semantic characteristics of language over time, in order to make language representative of their own thoughts, feelings, knowledge and understanding. It can be expected that as students grow, so their experiences with language will develop, and that these experiences will be reflected in increasingly complex explorations and experimentation with all of the language arts.
Evaluation of individual students must be comprehensive and must attempt to measure growth in all areas of the language arts. Continuous evaluation in the language arts does not occur on the basis of evaluation of isolated skills (grammar, phonics, reading comprehension, etc.) nor does it focus on the discrete features of language, such as its functions, forms, and/or different systems.

THREE

DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESSES

- **Language learning is a developmental, continuous process.** Therefore, the continuous evaluation of individual students should not be based on fixed assumptions which view language development as either a linear process or as cumulative, in the sense that "every student will" arrive at the end of the year with exactly the same version of a particular skill, ability or understanding. Instead, development should be described as a pattern of individual growth, in which all understand that there are many aspects of language-learning that are unique, and which will develop over time.

The continuous evaluation of students in the language arts will be based on the individual and varied strategies which students use in making sense of language, and on an appreciation of the developmental processes which shape an understanding of the semantic and syntactic features of language. Finally, continuous evaluation of students founded on the knowledge that language-learning is a developmental process should describe learning over time, in a manner that describes and values individual strengths, accomplishments, purposes and intentions.

FOUR

MEANING

- **The search for meaning is the core of every language experience.** Therefore, evaluation of individual students' growth and development in the language arts will concentrate on the meanings which students make as they explore, shape and make sense of experiences with language. The meanings which a student makes will occur in relation to specific experiences with language: varieties of content, situations, purposes, interactions with self and with others. These meanings will be shaped by socio-cultural realities, which include the students' gender, interests, needs and experiences in the world that lies outside the classroom. It must also be remembered that language always occurs

in some context, or situation, and that these contexts are social, cultural and experiential. The meanings which students make in their reading, writing, listening and speaking remind us that language is not only a system of letters and syntax, but is also a semantic system, a way of constructing and expressing the meanings of self and of others. Students bring their own feelings, knowledge and experiences to the making of meaning, in contexts shaped by their society and their culture.

Therefore, the continuous evaluation of a student's growth and development should be made by looking at the any different ways in which students make meaning in the language arts, as they work with a wide range of content, in order to realize different purposes and intentions. In the language arts, it is essential to understand and to include students' processes of making meaning, in any profile of their growth and development.

FIVE

LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

- **Language-in-context is not simply a matter of teachers' creating situations and activities in which students will be evaluated at various times during the year.** Children discover and create cohesive language rules by using language in varied, functional and meaningful contexts. The language arts must emphasize the personal, functional and social aspects of language that create the contexts, or situations, in which language is used. In fact, language functions in relation to the contexts, or situations, which arise out of the ordinary events of daily life: language is a system which allows individuals to make sense of these events, and to colour them with feeling, perception and understanding. Therefore, the evaluation of individual development and growth in the language arts will occur within contexts, or situations, that are meaningful, purposeful and functional to the students themselves. All frameworks for the evaluation of individual students must respect the criteria by which a "meaningful context" is developed. The features of a "meaningful context" are described in the second chapter of this document, and appear on the chart on page 16.

The relation of language to the situation in which it occurs may be noted continuously throughout the year, as changing contexts involve students in different experiences with language. In this manner, a great deal of information can be gathered about individual students' growth and development in the language arts, as students are involved with language in many different contexts.

SIX

VARIETIES OF CONTENT

- Students enhance their abilities and understanding when they are involved with varieties of content, and with the many ways in which language functions to express the ideas, feelings and knowledge of self and of others. Therefore, the continuous evaluation of the students' individual development and growth in the language arts will involve students with a wide range of content--poems, diaries, journals, the newspaper, fiction, non-fiction, songs, plays, films, discussions, different forms of media other than print, etc. The content given as a possible example (above) does not refer only to reading or to listening. Variety of content refers to varieties of activities which draw on all the language arts (listening, speaking, reading, writing) as a whole, activities which involve students in reading as well as writing journals, in writing as well as listening to poetry, and so on. Further details concerning content are discussed in the second chapter of this document (p. 22).

These six general guidelines for continuous evaluation comprise the guiding principles for evaluating of students' progress towards the achievement of the objectives of the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program.

- **Continuous Formative and Summative Evaluation**

There are two essential components of continuous evaluation : formative and summative evaluation. For too long now, evaluation has been viewed as judgmental

in purpose, aimed at the placement and promotion of students, in relation to normative and arbitrary standards of development, of what "...every child must know". It is this judgemental emphasis which makes the process of continuous evaluation appear to stand outside the processes of teaching and learning.

Continuous evaluation is an essential partner in all of teaching and learning. In order to understand this, however, we must begin to focus our energies and expertise on the role continuous evaluation plays in helping teachers, students and parents describe patterns of growth and development. This means, in turn, that continuous evaluation focuses on individual growth and development, and is a process of making sense of many different kinds of information which teachers and students gather throughout the year.

One of the chief distinctions between formative and summative evaluation is the moment in time when each takes place. However, when we concentrate our efforts on finding a pattern of language development which describes each of our students, it becomes clear that the evidence we gather formatively is the most comprehensive indicator of individual development. Summative evaluation is most valuable to students and to parents when it is based on information gathered formatively, and continuously, throughout the year.

What is the difference between formative and summative evaluation?

At one time, formative and summative evaluation were looked at very differently. Each form of evaluation was seen as distinct in purpose and intention. Formative evaluation was described as "diagnostic," as something teachers did to remediate the learner or to "diagnose" how the learner was doing. Frequently, diagnosis was based on adult standards of language proficiency, and these determined the basis for a series of assessments which were then added up at reporting time.

Summative evaluation, on the other hand, was seen as a pronouncement or judgment made about the student's "progress" at a given moment in time. The method of reaching a summative judgment was largely based on end-of-unit or end-of-year tests, on final assignments of various kinds. As well, these final tasks were seen as the sum-total of what the student had learned and were often evaluated outside of many other kinds of evidence which the teacher had seen throughout the term, or the school year. When people talked about the differences between formative and summative evaluation in the past, these were considered to be the major distinguishing features.

In order to begin to understand a view of continuous evaluation in which the meaning of the terms "formative" and "summative" has changed, it is useful to

leave language arts education behind for a moment and look, instead, at an example drawn from another discipline.

When an archaeologist begins to dig at the site of an ancient city or town, the bits and pieces of human life which are pulled from the ground are considered to be artifacts, or evidence, which will be put together to provide a whole picture of life at that historical time. These artifacts are labelled, as a means of describing where they were found and at what level of the earth's crust, because each level is indicative of a different period in the growth and development of human life. Eventually, all these dated artifacts are brought together and studied, or interpreted so that the archaeologist can begin to describe the pattern of human civilization in a particular place, over a particular period of time.

The most recent understanding of continuous evaluation is guided by the same processes and methods as that used by the archaeologist. In language arts education, all the various forms of evidence gathered by the teacher about individual students' growth and development become "artifacts." At a certain moment in time, the teacher examines all the artifacts in order to describe a pattern of individual development.

The many different instances of artifact-gathering may be described as a process of formative evaluation. Formative evaluation is embedded in the teaching and learning that goes on in language arts classrooms on a daily basis. Through formative evaluation, both teacher and student know what they are trying to achieve, what progress they are making and what kinds of understanding are emerging. Because special attention is given to everything that happens in the classroom, formative evaluation provides a constant source of artifact-like evidence about the nature of the learning process itself, as well as the experiences of individuals learning through language and using language to learn.

Summative evaluation occurs at intervals throughout the school year, when the teacher studies the artifacts, or different kinds of evidence, that have been gathered over a period of time. All the information is reviewed and described as a whole pattern of individual development, in which important statements are made about a student's strengths, abilities, and changes over time. These summative moments allow for a dialogue among teacher, learner and parents about language learning, at a moment in time when all the artifacts of a student's growth have been examined together.

How do formative and summative evaluation contribute to a description of individual growth and development?

Both formative and summative evaluation are essential to a description of emerging patterns of language growth and development. **The "artifacts" on which formative and summative evaluation are based do not change; what changes is the context in which these pieces of evidence are being studied, and the period of growth, over time, which they represent.**

In order to see growth and development comprehensively, time is an important element.

The teacher's notes and observations, conferences between teacher and learner, the dating and collecting of varieties of student work, the student's self-evaluations, the responses of peers to the student's efforts, and etc., are some of the kinds of information required in order to be able to describe the learning that has taken place. These artifacts are gathered during formative evaluation, and then provide the basis for describing and explaining patterns of individual growth and development in the language arts when summative evaluation takes place. These same artifacts give a range and a depth to the pattern that emerges, and allow for exchanges about a student's progress that are informed by many kinds of evidence, gathered continuously, over a period of time.

As these examples indicate, the individual student's involvement in the evaluation process is crucial. When evaluation is viewed as accompanying all aspects of teaching and learning, it becomes clear that the dialogue between teacher and learner in the process of evaluation is still another aspect of an ongoing partnership. Therefore, the individual student's self-evaluation must play a key role in the emerging pattern of development, whether over a brief period of time, or over a longer time span.

Summary of General Guidelines:

- ◆ The language arts (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are a whole language system. The language arts must be evaluated as a whole and not by examining listening, speaking, reading and writing in isolation.
- ◆ Evaluation of individual students must be comprehensive and must attempt to describe a pattern of growth in all areas of the language arts.
- ◆ Language learning is a developmental, continuous process. Evaluation must respect individual differences among students. Absolute and/or adult standards for language use are not appropriate for students in the elementary school.
- ◆ The search for meaning is the core of every language experience. Therefore, the continuous evaluation of the students' individual growth and development in the language arts will concentrate on the meanings students make as they shape and explore language.
- ◆ Children discover and create cohesive language rules by using language in varied, functional and meaningful contexts. Therefore, continuous evaluation of a student's growth and development in the language arts must occur in contexts, or situations, which are meaningful, varied and functional to the students themselves.
- ◆ Students enhance their abilities and understanding when they are involved with varieties of content, and with the many ways in which language functions to express the ideas, feelings and knowledge of self and others. Therefore, the continuous evaluation of individual development and growth in the language arts must involve students with the widest possible range of content.
- ◆ There is no reason to assume that the formative and summative components of continuous evaluation involve a mutually exclusive set of goals, practices or expectations. The formative and summative components of continuous evaluation fulfil different functions, and are based on the collection and description of artifacts, or evidence, of student growth and development over time. Both processes of evaluation are based on an ongoing dialogue between teacher and learner; both processes are intrinsic to teaching and learning. The dialogue between teacher and learner is a partnership, in which the self-evaluation of the student provides essential information for the emerging pattern of development which the evaluation process seeks to describe. Formative evaluation provides various kinds of evidence; this evidence, when dated and collected, allows for summative descriptions of individual patterns of development.

with an understanding of Within meaningful contexts: The student will	formal and informal uses of language when working alone, in pairs, in groups	processes and strategies for generating, ordering, expanding and clarifying ideas/concepts/information, etc.	the function of language to inform, explain, organize plan	the poetic function of language: poetry, stories, plays, imaginative ideas, feelings, notions of self-in world	the function of language as it expresses subjective ideas, feelings, notions of self-in world	the inter-relationship among the three (3) language cue systems	the influence of audience upon language choices	the variety of purposes which language can serve	the voices and viewpoints of poets and others
• create meaning									
• explore possible meanings									
• relate intended meanings to his/her own ideas, feelings, experiences, knowledge, intention									
• express meanings in an individual voice, from an individual viewpoint									
• communicate perceived meanings effectively and appropriately									

• Meaningful contexts are situations in which listening, speaking, reading and writing are fully integrated

• Meaningful contexts involve students with varieties of content and of activities within which they construct ideas, thoughts, feelings, knowledge.

• Meaningful contexts are interesting and relevant to the language user. They are child-centred, in that the child stands at the centre of the process of making meaning.

• Meaningful contexts provide opportunities to use the whole of language to express a variety of purposes and intentions

• Meaningful contexts provide for interactions with self, peers and others.

CHAPTER TWO

FOCUS OF EVALUATION: KEY ELEMENTS OF THE ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS I-VI PROGRAM

The general guidelines (pages 7-11; 15) described in Chapter One specify the pedagogical principles which must be respected when students are evaluated in the language arts, at any grade level of the elementary system. The guidelines themselves are derived from the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program and represent the guiding principles from which the program objectives were developed.

As this chapter moves into the relationship between program objectives and continuous evaluation, teachers and other educators are asked to remember that the objectives do not occur in isolation, either in this document or in the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program. The sense and the implications of all of the program objectives only become clear when they are viewed in company with the general guidelines for evaluation. A philosophy of continuous evaluation that is consistent with the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program can be best understood in terms of the relation that exists between the guidelines for evaluation and the program objectives.

THE CHART

The chart which appears on the opposite page represents the key elements of the program objectives that must be respected when the evaluating students' growth and development in the language arts. All the phrases which occur along the vertical and horizontal columns of the chart are referred to as elements. These elements comprise the particular abilities ("the student will") and kinds of understanding ("with an understanding of") promoted in the objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program. In the continuous evaluation of students in English language arts, all of these elements are essential. In a situation when this chart is used for the creation of specific models of evaluation (e.g. end-of-cycle evaluation instruments), it must be understood that no single element appearing on this chart may be seen as representative of any other single element. The intention of the chart is to describe those abilities and kinds of understanding which comprise a comprehensive assessment of the students' development; therefore, any model developed for continuous evaluation must ensure that all elements are represented.

In addition to the abilities and understanding, the chart also includes the characteristics of a "meaningful context". All of language occurs within a context; the systematic, functional and semantic features of language, as well as its personal and social characteristics, are all shaped by the contexts, or situations, in which language is used. The continuous evaluation of students in English language arts must take place within meaningful contexts.

The chart should be read and interpreted holistically. Furthermore, it should be seen as three-dimensional, in that all the abilities and kinds of understanding that are described are evaluated within meaningful contexts. For ease of reference, all of the elements appearing on the chart: meaningful contexts, abilities, kinds of understanding and content, are described separately in the pages that follow.

- **WITHIN MEANINGFUL CONTEXTS**

As one reviews the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program, it becomes clear that the program objectives are not a listing of isolated skills and abilities, but are aspects of language which give it a dynamic and functional character. As well, language is viewed as both individual and social in nature: individuals use language to both create and share ideas and understanding. Words are always rich with potential meanings: both the meanings individuals bring to the words they use and the meanings societies and cultures have attributed to words. It is in the contexts, or situations, where language is used that words absorb their meanings, as we speak our own words in dialogue with the words of others. These contexts involve the language of print, spoken words, the words we hear, and of the spoken image (e.g. film).

All of language occurs in a context, or situation. Within contexts that are meaningful to them as language users, students are able to : explore the various ways in which language functions; discover the rules which govern language structures; use language for various purposes, from expressing feelings to communicating information; communicating and create their own meanings in dialogue with the ideas, feelings and knowledge of others. The evaluation of individual students' progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program must, therefore, take place within contexts or situations which are varied, functional and meaningful to the students themselves. **These contexts must allow for the creation of a series of meaningful activities, and must invite the students to participate in activities that make sense to them, are familiar to them, are relevant to them, and require only knowledge or skills that have been outlined in the program objectives.**

A meaningful context is one in which listening, speaking, reading and writing are fully integrated: in other words, a situation in which language is understood to be whole. In classrooms, such contexts are frequently organized around topics or themes, and students are involved in activities in which the language arts are interrelated. Continuous evaluation must provide the artifacts, or evidence, of language development and growth in which the interrelationship among the language arts is both valued and discernible. This will mean that teachers provide opportunities for students to use all of language in the contexts, or situations, in which they are working. In the evaluation process, both the students' and the teacher's abilities to describe and interpret these contexts is fundamental: it is the context which shapes the function and form of language, as well as the expression of meaning.

As indicated on the chart itself, a meaningful context must include the following features:

- situations in which listening, speaking, reading and writing are fully integrated;
- opportunities to use the whole of language (LSRW) to express a variety of purposes and intentions;
- situations which are interesting and relevant to the language user; these situations place the child at the centre of the meaning-making process;
- opportunities that involve students with varieties of content and activities;
- opportunities for interactions with self, peers and others.

The development of meaningful contexts involving the continuous evaluation of individual student's abilities and understanding must respect the characteristics outlined above. These contexts should not be artificially created for evaluation purposes. That is to say: when teaching and learning in the classroom occur in meaningful contexts, these same contexts will also provide the different kinds of evidence, gathered over time, upon which a description of individual growth and development will be based.

● **ABILITIES: "THE STUDENT WILL..."**

The abilities which occur in this section of the chart are meaning-emphatic in nature. The Elementary Language Arts I-VI program is a child-centred model for the teaching of the language arts: **the individual students stand at the centre of the meanings which they make.** As well, the meaning-making process, as it is described on the chart, involves all of the language arts. For example, students will explore possible meanings through reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Language provides individuals with a system for making sense of experiences, information, ideas and feelings. The process of making meaning is influenced by both individual and social factors. The objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program are founded on the principle that the search for meaning is the core of every language experience.

The term "meaning" as it is used in this section of the chart refers to the sense that students make of their experiences through language, and the manner in which these meanings are formulated, expressed and communicated. **"Meaning" does not refer to prescribed skills, knowledge, or rote comprehension of stories and other types of printed texts.** The construction of meaning involves students in coming to terms with

their own purposes and intentions through language, as well as with the ideas and experiences of others. All of the language arts (listening, speaking, reading and writing) provide students with opportunities to search for, and construct, meaning. The construction of meaning is a process which calls upon various language-thinking strategies. Students should be encouraged to use the language-thinking strategies that they have developed for successfully coming to terms with experiences, ideas and feelings. **This is to say that the different language-thinking processes (as these relate to writing, responding to literature, talking, and etc.) used by students to make sense of their experiences cannot be standardized.** Instead of treating these processes as more or less uniform, teachers should observe and describe how their students make meaning of print, or communicate meaning when they speak, and etc. By gaining such insight into the different language-thinking processes of their students, teachers are better able to provide evidence of a student's pattern of development.

Different features of the meaning-making process are highlighted on the chart. Taken together, these features ask that students create, explore, relate, express and communicate meaning for different purposes and intentions. The nature of these purposes and intentions can only be clarified by looking at the whole chart, particularly the contexts and the content with which the students are working. In other words, the students' abilities to create, explore, relate, express and communicate meaning are not evaluated as isolated "products" or skills.

● **KINDS OF UNDERSTANDING: "WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF..."**

Each of the elements which appears across the top of the chart represents the different kinds of awareness or understanding that are developed, over time, as students explore the way language works. These kinds of understanding range from formal and informal uses of language, to the way in which language expresses different voices and viewpoints.

As was true for the abilities ("the student will...") section of the chart, each of the elements pertain to all of the language arts--listening, speaking, reading and writing. For example, the element which asks students to demonstrate their understanding of the expressive function of language must involve listening, speaking, reading and writing. The same can be said of all of the other elements appearing on the chart.

Given that the particular kinds of understanding which are included in this section of the chart have been excerpted from the objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program, teachers are asked to refer to the program document for a full description of each element (Cross-reference to the program document is provided on p. 23).

- **CONTENT**

A continuous evaluation of elementary students, whether for formative or summative purposes, must involve students with a wide variety of content. Specific examples of the range of content anticipated throughout the elementary years are found in the "Related Content" section of the objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program. Varieties of content not only encourage students to make sense of language in many different contexts, but also allow teachers to gather evidence about a student's growth and development in a comprehensive manner.

CROSS-REFERENCE

For a more complete description of the elements that comprise "understanding," please refer to the following pages of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program :

- formal and informal uses of language p. 29, 36, 37, 63
- processes and strategies for generating, ordering, expanding and clarifying ideas/concepts/information, etc. p. 35-39
41-45
63
- the function of language to inform, explain, organize and plan p. 29-33
47-51
67
- the poetic function of language p. 67
- the function of language as it expresses subjective ideas, feelings, etc. p. 67
- the interrelationship among the three (3) language cue system p. 47-51
63
- the influence of the audience upon language choices p. 29-33
35-39
41-45
- the varieties of purpose which language can serve p. 47-51
- the voices and viewpoints of peers and others p. 41-45

CHAPTER THREE

RELATION OF KEY ELEMENTS TO EVALUATION PRACTICES

The elements of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program which must be respected during evaluation are identified on the preceding chart (p. 16). These elements comprise abilities ("the student will"), understanding ("with an understanding of"), contexts that are meaningful to the students themselves ("within meaningful contexts") and a variety of content. However, these particular abilities, ways of understanding, and contexts are not evaluated separately. The settings where evaluation takes place are found where context, ability and understanding converge. These "settings" are called dimensions.

The dimensions on the chart are as follows:

- Within meaningful contexts, the student will create meaning(s) with an understanding of formal and informal uses of language: when working alone, in pairs, in groups.
- Within meaningful contexts, the student will create meaning(s) with an understanding of strategies for generating, ordering, expanding and clarifying ideas/concepts/information, etc.
- and so on, until the student's ability to create meaning(s) has been viewed in all the settings, or dimensions, which emerge in relation to the other elements which appear in the vertical column of the chart.

Similarly, all of the other remaining elements are combined into dimensions. Continuous evaluation of the student's progress toward the achievement of the objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program must be based on all the dimensions, or settings, which emerge from the chart. This being said, it will become immediately clear that any standardized test, even one administered under optimum conditions, cannot comprise a continuous, comprehensive evaluation of a student's abilities or understanding, in relation to the dimensions specified in the chart. All the dimensions described in the chart will occur, in the classroom over time.

Evaluation guidelines for the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program must take seriously the need for continuous evaluation, the developmental and individual processes which influence language growth and the relationship among teaching, learning, and evaluating. Similarly, the continuous evaluation of individual students, in the dimensions specified in this document, will be possible by considering language growth as it occurs in different contexts, involving a wide range of content, over a period of time. The richness of such an approach to evaluation is that the many artifacts, or evidence, which teachers collect over a period of time and which are described holistically in terms of a pattern of development, gives texture to the ongoing dialogue among teachers, learners, and parents. When the fullest possible range of students' experiences with language becomes the evidence on which continuous evaluation is based, then evaluation serves in partnership with teaching, learning and the pedagogical principles which shape whole language classrooms.

- **How to use the chart**

The dimensions which occur in the chart (abilities + different kinds of understanding, within contexts that are meaningful to the student) present what is to be evaluated, continuously, and over time. The abilities and kinds of understanding which occur in each dimension are derived from the objectives of the English Language Arts I-VI program. All the program objectives place language processes, functions and use within meaningful contexts; therefore, the abilities and understanding which combine within each dimension on the chart can be evaluated only within the contexts in which they occur.

The dimensions, viewed within meaningful contexts, specify the WHAT of evaluation but not the HOW. In whole language classrooms, all of these dimensions will occur continuously and frequently, from the beginning of Cycle One to the end of Cycle Two. What will change, over time, will be the developmental progress of students, the particular content, and the contexts in which the students are using language to learn.

The dimensions of the chart serve as guidelines for teachers, school board and in-school administrators, consultants and parents, by providing the focus for continuous evaluation. The dimensions are intended to provide coherence between pedagogical practices and evaluation criteria. This means that teachers are encouraged to interpret and apply each of the dimensions in relation to the content of their teaching and to the developmental progress of individual students. It would, therefore, be inappropriate for teachers to plan their teaching units around the dimensions which comprise the chart. Rather, the dimensions provide the criteria that should be used for interpreting and describing all of the evidence that teachers gather with respect to individual students.

As well, the dimensions in the chart, when viewed in connection with varied content and contexts, will support the following kinds of questions:

- "What am I looking for when I evaluate?"
- "What does the student appear to be doing here?"
- "How has the student's growth in understanding developed over this period of time?"
- "How comprehensive is my evidence about the student's language growth and development?"
- "What does the student know about the way in which different contexts shape language?"
-

The Appendix to this document (p. 32) provides an example of how the dimensions complement current teaching practices. Readers are asked to refer to the Appendix for a fuller description of the meaning of the dimensions.

- **Recommended Approaches to Evaluation**

The continuous evaluation of an individual student's growth and development in the language arts, at any grade level, should involve the collection of a very wide range of artifacts, or evidence. In a whole language classroom, such information can be found in: student journals; tapes of oral presentations; the teachers' anecdotal record of conferences with students; informal observations made by the teacher of students working in groups, pairs, on their own; the student's reading/ response journal; a variety of student writing; student responses to different forms of media; different strategies which students use in coming to terms with their feelings, ideas, experiences; etc.

There are numerous ways of organizing the many different kinds of evidence teachers accumulate about their students. During summative evaluation, all of this information should be interpreted holistically--from a perspective that acknowledges the whole, interrelated nature of language growth. This holistic description is achieved by examining all the evidence that has been dated and gathered, and by looking for patterns of individual development over time, which the evidence suggests.

One model which favours an approach to continuous evaluation that is compatible with the Elementary English Language Arts I-VI program is the portfolio. A portfolio, regardless of the physical form it may take, is a collection of student work gathered progressively throughout the year. All the work contained in a student's portfolio should be dated for ease of reference. A student portfolio contains more than a student's written work; within the portfolio there should be evidence of all of the language arts--listening, speaking, reading and writing. As well, the portfolio should contain evidence of: teacher-student dialogue (conferences, interviews, exchanges, and etc.), the teacher's anecdotes and observations, student self-evaluations, peer evaluations, and so on. In addition, the portfolio should contain evidence of language-thinking processes, e.g. early drafts of finished pieces of writing, the student's reading/ response journal, etc. In addition to giving evidence of the student's development in all areas of the language arts, a portfolio should contain varieties of content, e.g. responses to many different kinds of printed texts, different kinds of writing (to explain, to express subjective feelings, stories, poems, etc.), a record of different ways of using talk, and so on.

When the portfolio is opened for continuous evaluation, it should contain a great deal of evidence of developmental growth. Teachers may examine each portfolio and all that it contains, or may examine a representative sampling of the evidence which each portfolio contains. When only a representative sampling of the whole of a portfolio is evaluated, it is assumed that this sample will contain evidence of listening, speaking, reading and writing. As well, it is important to remember that the individual students' evaluation of their own efforts is intrinsic to the process of summative evaluation. Whether the whole portfolio, or a sampling of the whole, forms the basis of evaluation, the teacher's description of a student's development must incorporate student choices

about what is to be evaluated, as well as student self-evaluation.

When teachers make summative descriptions about the students' development in language arts, they should be reflecting on the significance of a whole range of student work, looking for patterns of development, and synthesizing what is important to say about an individual student's growth over a period of time. As the dimensions on the chart (p. 16) indicate, patterns of development and growth must take account of the highly individual nature of learning. The best possible information about an individual student must, of necessity, comprise a wide range of experiences with language, collected continuously throughout the school year. The portfolio model of evaluation is one way of organizing evidence of development in the language arts.

The summative component of continuous evaluation is not based on testing, nor on a thin sampling of a particular student's work, nor on the sum total of discrete scores, nor is it based on normative, linear views of language achievement. Summative evaluation must be comprehensive. It must describe a pattern of development over a period of time. As well, because language is a whole and interrelated system, a student's evaluation must provide information about continuous language growth and not simply record an assessment of listening, speaking, reading and writing as though each were a discrete ability, or skill.



- **Evaluation Criteria**

Continuous evaluation which is consistent with the dimensions specified in these guidelines is criterion-referenced. The criteria are derived from the specific types of abilities and understanding listed on the chart (p. 16). These criteria apply to individuals and will be shaped by individual patterns of language development. Therefore, the criteria are not interpreted as absolute and/or adult standards of language use: the standards which the criteria describe must be established in relation to the student and his/her language-learning processes and language development.

The criteria which are used for the continuous evaluation of individual students' language development must conform to the dimensions and general guidelines described in this document. When these criteria are applied they should not be used to compare one student against another. Rather, the criteria are applied on the basis of the individual and developmental nature of language growth.

CHAPTER FOUR

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **Learning styles**

Every individual's learning style is unique. The focus of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program is upon the child, and those processes and strategies through which individuals make sense of their world through language. There can be no fixed standard for such language-learning processes. **All continuous evaluation practices, whether formative or summative, must respect these individual learning styles, which necessarily incorporate different language-learning processes and strategies.**

- **Multi-cultural realities**

Québec society is pluralistic--a community of many cultures and many languages. The continuous evaluation of individual students in English language arts must take account of the influence of different cultures and languages upon the way students' construct language and their views of the world. The continuous evaluation of students should not be based upon models of language-mastery learning, basic skills, or degrees of mastery attainment of "standard" English. The pattern of development which emerges, over time, for students from different cultural settings will reflect rich and important knowledge about languages and about the world. These pluralistic "ways of seeing" should be valued as a kind of living resource in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to support this pluralistic reality by introducing the literature and traditions of different cultures into their curriculum planning. **As is true for students whose first language is English, the continuous evaluation of students for whom English is a second, or even a third, language will be based upon the guidelines and dimensions described in this document.** The content of this document respects the developmental growth of children, and recommends that teachers regard the time it takes children of different cultures to learn English as positive steps in the language-learning process.

- **Students with special needs**

Special allowances will have to be made for visually or orally impaired students, and for students with other exceptionalities. The focus for these students must be on their progress toward the attainment of the twenty (20) terminal objectives, at a level compatible with their particular needs and interests, and with respect to the rationale and guidelines for continuous evaluation which are described in this document. **It should also**

be noted that there are many forms of physiological difference among children that are not in any way indicative of cognitive difficulties, as is the case for the visually, orally or physically impaired child. It is, therefore, especially important that teachers come to understand how students with special needs learn most advantageously; such knowledge will emerge readily in a model of continuous evaluation which respects individual differences and values the accomplishments of all students.

- **Developmental progress: Cycle One and Cycle Two**

The guidelines and dimensions described in this document, which together comprise a policy of continuous evaluation consistent with the objectives of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program, apply both to Cycle One and Cycle Two. Like the program objectives, the significance of each dimension is related to a child-centred and developmental approach to language growth. For this reason, the continuous evaluation of students at the Cycle One level must take place on the basis of their development towards the abilities and different kinds of understanding, which together form the dimensions specified in this document. All of the abilities and understanding described in this document will grow and enrich over time, in conjunction with the ways in which the students themselves grow through experiences with all of language. The interpretation of the abilities and understanding which occur here, in the context of Grade One students, for example, will only become clear as teachers gather evidence over a period of time, and seek to interpret and describe this evidence in terms of patterns of development. The patterns which emerge may share certain characteristics, but they will also support the individual nature of language development. For this reason, there can be no standardization of the particular abilities and understanding which have been described in this document.

APPENDIX

A CLASSROOM TEACHER TALKS ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNING AND EVALUATING**

The text you are about to read was written by Ms. Debbie Stewart, a classroom teacher at Valois Park School, an elementary school in the Lakeshore School Board.

Debbie was asked to read the Definition of the Domain as it was being written and to evaluate the degree to which it corresponded to what she actually did in her classroom. In writing this text for the ministère de l'Éducation, Debbie was asked to serve in the role of teacher-researcher, and to be critical in her evaluation of the degree to which the Domain reflected her understanding of the way her students develop knowledge about language, the ways in which her students learn best, and her commitment to Whole Language pedagogy.

It seemed important, as the text of the Domain was developing, to be assured that what was said about the interrelationship among teaching, learning and evaluating had a real and immediate correspondence to pedagogical practice. Debbie's response helped to provide this assurance, as did the feedback to the different drafts of the Domain received from other educators in the field.

The reader should be aware that Debbie Stewart's text is a descriptive profile of how teaching, learning and evaluating are interwoven into one teacher's classroom. References to the Domain in Debbie's text are intended to stress the extent to which the evaluation policy in this document supports both the ways in which children learn and Whole Language pedagogy. As Debbie helps us to see, the Domain is a catalyst for her own questions about language and learning, encouraging us to clarify our observations, assumptions and beliefs. Of special significance is the way in which Debbie's evaluation process reflects what she knows about her students, and the many instances in which the students inform her own learning.

** NOTE: In footnotes throughout the text, readers will find a cross-reference to the dimensions of the chart (pg. 16). These are suggestions only. Dimensions other than those selected may also apply to each activity.

BIOGRAPHY

As a teacher, I have the responsibility to develop a unit of study that adheres to the objectives and pedagogy of the Elementary Language Arts I-VI program.

One of the sample literature units which accompany the Elementary Language Arts program for grade four is biography. I particularly enjoy this unit because it is a favourite topic of mine and also because I have experienced lots of success with my students when we explore biographies together. I have found that there has been a great deal of enthusiasm and interest generated by students who have been exposed to this type of literature.

This unit is forever changing and never stagnant. As each group responds to the activities, I see and learn ways to change and modify. Biography is not getting older but better!

Evaluation is a very important part of all learning. Evaluation processes must respect the key elements of the program objectives and take place in meaningful contexts, evaluating language as a whole rather than as distinctive parts and isolated skills. The evaluation guidelines are very helpful to me in organizing the assessment of my students. Probably the most significant factor is that the Definition of Domain for English Language Arts supports and confirms what I am doing. I am constantly going back and forth from my criteria to those in the guidelines and on the chart. It is rewarding to realize that your own program fits comfortably into the evaluation guidelines. It also provides me with language that I am scrambling for. This helps when preparing student portfolios, report cards, and when talking to parents.

The following is a description of my Biography unit and a look at how the classroom activities provide a basis for evaluation of individual development in the language arts, one that respects the guidelines in the Definition of Domain.

The unit is divided into three major sections and covers a period of approximately six weeks.

INTRODUCTION

Objective: To introduce the concept of "biography."

To begin, the students are divided into small groups and asked to brainstorm and record what they understand about biography. Children's comments usually include:

- "It's about someone's life."
- "It's not the same as autobiography."
- "You've got to know the person."
- "They look for the bad stuff."
- "Houdini is a biography."
- "My dad read a biography once."

As they talk, the students are asked to come to consensus on three significant observations about biography, and to be able to explain the reasons for their choices.¹

When I set this task, I ask myself: "What are some of the things that the children will be doing with language?" I recognize that the students will be using informal language to express their ideas and to explore possible meanings. How effective will they be? Do they wait their turn? Do they wait for attention before speaking? Can they draw from previous knowledge? Can they explain and organize their ideas? Can they respect the opinions of others as they work to arrive at consensus? Can they put their ideas in an appropriate order to present to the class? Do they recognize the role of recording? How are they noting the information? These elements become the criteria that I will use to evaluate language as I observe the children in real talk and natural settings. I check these criteria against the chart, in the Definition of Domain, to confirm that I'm on track and meeting the objectives of the program.

The assessment takes place as the students are immersed in their tasks. Information is gathered through observation and through interaction with the children. I join the groups, I listen, and I concentrate on the out of the ordinary. I quickly note my observations on a sheet of paper to add to the student's portfolios when there is more time.

¹ Within meaningful contexts, students explore possible meanings with an understanding of formal/informal uses of language; voices and viewpoints of others.

PART I THE BIOGRAPHY

Objectives: To model a biography
To study author's style
To reflect on social content

The biography that I select is *The Runaway Slave - The Harriet Tubman Story*. I chose this novel because I enjoy reading it and because of its social content. I read to the students every day and request that a journal be kept for reflection--both personal and in response to questions that I pose. For example, students might be asked to compare and contrast Harriet's life with their own, or they may be asked to describe how they feel after a certain event in Harriet Tubman's life story. The students are invited to talk to each other before or during the writing of their responses. A typical journal entry usually focuses on the different clothing, on schooling, on the notion of discipline:

"Harriet wears potato sacks. They must have itched. I get to choose my clothes."

"I would not like to be Harriet. I heard a little about the slave trade, but I didn't know it was like that. It's awful."

"Harriet gets beaten. I get sent to my room."

"How come no one stopped this?"²

Once again, I ask myself questions:

Are they able to compare and contrast? Can they use language effectively to explain? Is there any evidence of self in their responses? Do they make their meanings clear when interacting with their peers? Is the language appropriate? Do I notice a difference between oral language usage and written language? In sharing, are they listening and responding to other viewpoints?

When I ask these kinds of questions, I am able to discover so much about the students' language development and to evaluate using criteria consistent with the principles and objectives of the Elementary Language Arts program.

² Within meaningful contexts, students relate intended meanings to their own ideas, feelings, experiences and etc. with an understanding of: relationship among three (3) cue systems; poetic function of language; language as it functions subjectively.

It is probably very important at this time to share with you the fact that, although, my questions provide me with many possibilities for evaluation, I never attempt them all. I select what I feel that I can handle, and then I observe a few of the children for that day. The beauty is that many of the criteria in the Definition of Domain are relevant in the context of other activities, so that I am able to select different students to observe on different days, until I have made the rounds through the class, without the need to change my evaluation criteria every time that an activity changes.

In the next activity, groups of students are asked to browse through printed materials (newspapers, magazines etc.) and to select words that describe Harriet's life and their own. They are requested, also, to select the three "best" words and to be prepared to defend their selections in group sharing. I believe they make these choices because of the journal entries (e.g.: comparisons of Harriet's life and their own) and the sharing. Because it is the 1990's, the children are very sensitive to the meaning of words such as "black" and "racism" and it is very evident, in their sharing and discussions, that they can neither understand nor accept "slavery." They become very moralistic.³

Finding a word that names a situation or an emotion is not always easy and so I enjoy watching the students go at this. I learn a lot about vocabulary. Can they select descriptive vocabulary? Do they rely on the common, overworked words? Can they explain the meaning of a word as others question it? Can they accept other viewpoints gracefully? As the children immerse themselves in this activity, I join groups, listening to answers to the questions that I have asked. Significant findings are noted in a student's portfolio, which is the model I use to gather lots of information about a student's language development. Student portfolios also provide me with the opportunity to zero in on areas of need and to focus on these, whether these needs are individual, or related to the class as a whole.

A third assignment asks the students to design a "wanted poster" that includes as many relevant details as possible. They are asked to present these and to provide an explanation about the content, and how it relates to the novel. This, too, is always fun. The class really enjoys the activity and I get a real chance to see who has picked up what details and which ones are important to whom and why. This assignment asks that the students synthesize all the information they have about biography, and about Harriet Tubman, while also giving me a clear picture of the students' own personal reflections about the novel.

³ In meaningful contexts, students explore possible meanings and create meaning, with an understanding of: processes and strategies for generating, ordering and expanding ideas; influence of audience upon language choices; subjective ideas and feelings; functions of language to inform and to express.

I get samples of the students' creativity and of their expression in something other than prose. These I can keep and make notes about, adding both to the growing student portfolios and to my own anecdotal records.⁴

As we arrive at the section of the novel that introduces the underground railroad, I want the students to develop an understanding about what the underground railroad was and its importance to the freedom of the slaves. I begin by asking the students to predict in their journals just what they think an "underground" railroad might be. For the most part, the students never seem to know what it is; it's interesting to find out and assess how they draw from their existing knowledge to come up with a definition. Typically, the students will come to some of the following definitions:

"It must be like the metro."

"Yeah, it must be like a train but it goes under something."

"I think underground means secret so it must be a secret train."

Once the introduction has been made, the children form groups and dramatize how the railroad operates, acting out the roles of characters in the biography. As the students organize for their presentation, I evaluate the students by looking for answers to questions such as: How do they go about collecting and compiling the data? How do they transform information into a dramatic script? Do they know the form of a play? Do they have the appropriate language? Do they use the first person when they write? Do they model any of the dialect as presented in the text? Do they recognize the significance of voice as they act out their parts? I continue to record any significant observations and add my written comments to the students' portfolios. I note, too, any interventions that may be required. It is important, I think, to reiterate that these questions come up naturally during the activity and correspond so well to the evaluation criteria on the chart in the Definition of Domain.

Whenever I share a novel, I usually spend some time examining at the author's style. This book is no exception. In groups the children meet to discuss a variety of techniques used by the author of *The Runaway Slave*. I ask them to consider and look for examples of the ways in which the author develops an emotional response from her readers, the significance of the dialect and songs, and the development of the characters. Some examples of the children's responses are :

⁴ In meaningful contexts, students explore possible meanings and create meaning, with an understanding of: processes and strategies for generating, ordering and expanding ideas; influence of audience upon language choices; subjective ideas and feelings; functions of language to inform and to express.

- "She (the author) uses the different words to make the story more real."
"She makes you try to be part of the time."
"I don't like that stuff in books but in movies it's easier to understand."
"She puts in lots of gore so you'll know how bad it was."
"She makes me want to hate the slave master."
"The story is easy to follow - the titles help."
"You never find out why the Slave Masters do this."

I assess how well the students can locate information. Do they recognize the kind of language that affects one's emotions? Do they see the variety of purposes that language can serve? Can they form an opinion? How literal are they? Can they interact and respond to someone else's views or do they simply spew out their own? Do they recognize that the author only presents one side of the story? Is there any evidence of transfer, from oral discussions to written work?⁵

The last activity has the students scanning other recent material (e.g.: newspapers) to locate situations similar in nature to the novel. The children usually bring in the most obvious material (e.g.: Rodney King). However, often parents become involved and help us to build a repertoire that expands the student's thinking.

I think that it is important that the parents become involved because it gets families talking about issues and ethics. Children need to hear these views. When the students bring in these articles, it is obvious by what they say that discussion has gone on at home. The children usually begin by presenting the clipping; . . . when I ask how the article relates to Harriet Tubman, the students refer to their parents: "My Dad said that this is a type of prejudice because . . ." or "My mom told me a story about when she was a little girl. . ."

I want to evaluate whether or not individual students can make associations and see connections between the book and daily occurrences, as they are reported in magazines and newspapers.

⁵ Within a meaningful context, students create meaning and communicate perceived meanings effectively, with an understanding of: the poetic function of language; influences of audience and purpose upon language choices.

PART II

Independent Study of a Biography

**OBJECTIVES: TO MODEL A BIOGRAPHY
TO COMPARE AND CONTRAST STYLE
TO PREPARE A SUMMARY**

I ask the students to select a biography of interest to them. The objective is a class book that houses a written piece from each of the students about the subject of their biography. Each day, I select a few students to share their novel with me. I am listening for a number of things. Is the novel appropriate for their level? Does it appear to be of interest to them? (Ex.: "I wanted to read about Wayne Gretsky because I play hockey." "I love magic and I've heard Houdini was great. My dad told me a story about him." "I wanted to read about Ann Frank because my teacher was a Jewish girl in Germany during the war and she told us some things about it.") What reading strategies are being utilized to unlock meaning? What is their fluency like? These findings are noted in their portfolios as well.

Approximately four literature study groups are held over the course of a specified time. In the first session, the students are asked to discuss the author's style and to compare the similarities and differences in each other's texts. I listen for those statements that tell me that the students are applying concepts (ex. the role of dialect) discussed in our group novel study. I can evaluate the way in which ideas are communicated and I get some input about the reader's understanding of the relationship between author and text.⁶ The students are also requested to determine a way to present the comparisons they are discovering among their different biographies. It's difficult to recapture this unless you've been in the classroom. I'm never sure just what the students will devise but, believe me, I'm never surprised anymore. Some groups have devised charts or graphs; others have divided a sheet of paper into 2 parts and listed similarities on one side and differences on the other; others write out statements (e.g.: "Three people in our group have biographies that . . ."). The sharing provides me with some more information. Many of the chart grids certainly tell me that maths concepts are being applied, which is just super. I can also say that many group presentations reveal whether or not the students were able to put together their discussion in some orderly fashion. When a group cannot, I reflect back on the group's

⁶ Within a meaningful context, students express meanings in an individual voice and from an individual viewpoint, with an understanding of: three functions of language (poetic, informative, subjective); voices and viewpoints of peers and others.

talk. Does the problem stem from an inability to see the relationships or is it because the group really couldn't organize a successful discussion?

During the second session the students are asked to bring the information that they are gathering and to share the methods that they are using to organize the material. Students use a variety of methods.

Sometimes, we discuss these methods together:

Student: "I read a bit and then I wrote it in my own words on the paper."

Teacher: "Do you write down everything you read?"

Student: "No, just the important stuff."

Sometimes, I take the role of the careful listener:

"I put a heading on the top of each sheet and see I put down things that go with it."

"I write notes, I don't worry about sentences or anything. When I do my good copy I'll fill it in."

I can evaluate organizational strengths and ability to retrieve relevant facts. As I listen I can assess how well the students are relating to the material. Is the information I am hearing extremely literal? Are the students confident in what they are sharing? Is there clarity in what they say? I can take samples from their written information to assess content and form.

In the final session the students are asked to bring to the group five key points that will be included in their individual biographical sketches. They must share them with other group members and explain why these are significant facts. The other listeners may ask questions and challenge the choices. The students are certainly making choices and using language to explain and express their viewpoints. I am able to make notes about students' to determine if their reasoning is valid and logical.

The next phase is the actual writing, for publication in a class book. This follows the natural writing process, which comprises: a rough (first) draft, revision following feedback from peers, editing for punctuation surface errors, with a peer, and preparation of the final copy for sharing.⁷

⁷ Within a meaningful context, students communicate perceived meanings effectively and appropriately, with an understanding of: the interrelationship among the three (3) language cue systems.

I assess what the students do at each stage of the writing process and record, in the student's portfolio, what I observe. I make observations about each student's approach to writing, their understanding of the writing process, and how well they can work with peers and accept feedback. I often make a copy of a section of a draft to place in the portfolios so that I can evaluate the content and the form. I set specific objectives for my evaluation and I record my observations. These help me to see the strengths of each student, and to set goals and specific areas to focus on with each individual.

After an author has presented his contribution, small groups get together, discuss the material and prepare a written response to it. I stress the importance of positive feedback so the author can benefit from the exchange. The students respond to anything, from the way in which the reader reads, to the creative way a piece of writing is illustrated. Some typical comments would include:

"I like your beginning sentence. It is different from anyone else's."

"It was easy to understand." "I learned new things. I didn't know Houdini died because he got punched in the stomach."

"I like your illustrations. They have a lot of detail. You draw great."

"You used good words, like 'amazing'."

I find this type of evaluation invaluable because students are determining the criteria, reinforcing good work and allowing each individual's strengths to become a model for subsequent work. The written comments are photocopied for the author and for the student's portfolio. There is always a lot of enthusiasm once the students learn that they can trust the group's response to their work to be positive.

The students participate in self-evaluation.⁸ They meet with me to discuss what they consider are the strengths of the piece, and the areas where they would like to improve. I record this in the writing portfolios and they become the focus for the next piece of writing which a student will do. I am always amazed at the insights that the children have about themselves as writers and the process of self-evaluation certainly stresses both ownership of their work, and responsibility for future learning. I hear statements like:

"It was hard not to copy the book."

"I like my work because I got down the important stuff."

"I learned a lot of neat stuff."

"I still have to watch my spelling; there are still mistakes in this."

"I need to look for the main points. My work is too long. Everyone else's is shorter."

"My hand writing is not neat."

"I had trouble with quotation marks."

⁸ Within meaningful context, students create meaning with an understanding of two functions of language (informative, subjective).

The Elementary English Language Arts program emphasizes the importance of the child at the center of his/her learning. I don't feel there is any better way to respect the principle of child-centred learning than to make each student a part of the evaluation process.

Publication of student writing is an important part of the process because it gives meaning and authenticity to their work. Once bound, the published work becomes a book that others will refer to and learn from. It gives all the revisions towards the preparation of a final copy a purpose: it is what "real" authors do.

PART III

Writing a "Real" Biography

Objectives : **To practise interviewing skills**
 To record and organize information given orally
 To prepare an actual biography

The students are asked to choose a living subject for a biography which they will write.⁹ The students prepare themselves for the actual interview by brainstorming, in groups, the steps that should be followed in order to complete this activity. The class meets to share their organizational plan and to refine their individual plans. I am able to assess the students' ability to organize and sequence a set of steps. Who can break down a large task into the necessary steps? How should the steps be organized? Who is using a method of recording that is effective?

In small groups, the students discuss ten major areas that might be a focus during the interview. On the basis of their discussion, a list of major topics is compiled. Major topics are divided among the groups, who develop more specific questions related to each topic. These are also organized and offered as support models for those who feel they want them. For example, under the major heading Schooling, questions might include:

- "How many schools did you attend?"
- "Did you like one particular teacher?"
- "What subject did you enjoy?"
- "Was school different then from now?"

During the course of this assignment, the students meet three or four times to discuss their personal progress--how the interview went, how they recorded the responses and talk, and how they are transcribing the information into "what will become" a finished copy. Once

* I used the terminology "Real" Biography because that's what children say. It's interesting that although they read and work with published biographies, it comes to life for them when they are "doing" one on their own with a living and familiar subject.

⁹ Within meaningful contexts, students create meaning with an understanding of: three (3) functions of language; influence of audience upon language choices; voices and viewpoints of peers and others; processes and strategies for generating, ordering and clarifying ideas.

again the students take an active role in their learning and the modelling they get from each other provides the group with many more ideas than I could ever offer in the same amount of time. In addition, the support and positive reinforcement they receive from each other helps to develop their self-confidence as learners. I get an overview of the progress of the students and can intervene whenever necessary.

The final stage involves the writing and presentation of the "Biography." The writing up of the material follows the different stages of the writing process. The binding of the material is up to the students' choice and must be neat, colourful and secure. The presentation is made very special by inviting the parents, together with any individuals who have been the subject of the biography, to join us for the afternoon. The students introduce and share their biographies. It's great fun and provides the students with a different audience with whom they may share their accomplishments. Each biography has a comment page attached to it and any reader may respond to the author on this comment page. Here are examples of the comments that the children receive:

"I'm really proud of you."

"What a nice tribute to your grandmother!"

"You really found out lots of interesting information."

"How did you ever remember all of the facts?"

"I just love the story of your mom's first date. Mine was something like that, too!"

"Great job!"

The students look forward to this day with anticipation and it seems to give them that true sense of: "I'm a real biographer."

I ask the students to write a brief self-evaluation of their biographies for me. I add my written comments about each biography, touching on the content, form and overall presentation, as well as the students self-evaluation. This concludes the unit.

One might now ask what I do with all the information I have collected. As the unit runs, generally, from one reporting term to another, I go through the portfolio to organize a profile of each individual child as a language user. I review my comments and compare samples of the work of individual students between the previous and current terms. It must be emphasized that, although I have been referring only to the area of English language arts in this unit, the student portfolio also includes other areas of the curriculum. These, too, are part of the evaluation. I attempt to group comments and information relating to specific criteria together.

Once the material is compiled and organized, I begin to complete the summative evaluation for the report to the parents. I often refer to a student's actual statements when I am writing to parents. At the parent-teacher interview, each student's portfolio is used to explain and expand on the report sent home. It is invaluable when a teacher can show parents what their children are doing by using authentic pieces of work. I also use the portfolio with the students, as part of the teaching and learning process. We sit down and go through it, discussing all their strengths and looking at the things that will help them to become stronger language users. This is a very personal exchange and places emphasis on a particular individual. I think it is very important to send out the message that learning is individual, and that the students are at the center of their own learning. In my dialogue with each of my students, we are able to recognize and discuss individual learning goals for the next term. Student interviews are held prior to the parent interviews, so that any pertinent information can be shared with the parents as well.

As I finish this outline I reflect back on the unit, the philosophy and in particular the key elements as outlined on the chart, I realize that there are more questions and more concerns that come to my mind:

- What does it mean to fully "integrate" listening, speaking, reading and writing? I feel that I still need to discuss this question further, in order to clarify for myself what a fully integrated evaluation might involve.
- How can I be a more effective facilitator when the children are in discussion groups? (e.g.: Learn to say just the right thing so that I don't influence the group to think my way but do move them on to a higher level of thought. Or: Knowing just what to say to get children to resolve their own differences rather than having the conflicts because of my direct intervention.)
- How can I get children to be more critical readers of their own work?
- How can I bridge the gap between the portfolio and the report card (and marks)?
- What are some more ways that I can use to assess the student's developing knowledge about the three language cue systems?
- Do the children have enough opportunities to tell me what they think about their work? What are the questions that open up this dialogue and sustain "talk"?

It is surprising that even though I have been teaching and refining this unit for four years, there are still "questions."

However, I do believe that it is very important for me, as the teacher, to self-evaluate the strategies that *I* am using and to ask *my own* questions. I feel that in looking for both answers to my own questions I will only become a more effective evaluator. There was a point in my career when I felt that "these questions" meant that something was wrong, that being dissatisfied with an area meant that I wasn't a "good teacher". Now I believe just the reverse--the questions mean that learning is taking place.

I thank you for reading this article. I hope that you will see between the lines of my story, that what you do every day in your classroom is *your* evaluation of language development. Language is so natural to us and is all around us. Evaluation should occur in an environment that is as natural as the language itself. Of equal importance are the observations we make about how children learn best, and the questions we ask about evaluation which will support both teaching and learning. It seems to me that the philosophy of the *Elementary Language Arts I-VI* program and the approach to evaluation in the Definition of the Domain support and facilitate assessment of students' language development of children in a child-centred, whole language classroom.

**BOOKS
ON
ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

**(Compiled by Ann Poland,
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